



Westerly High School

WESTERLY

THE SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

April 15, 2005



School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT)

The school accountability program of the Rhode Island Department of Education

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Purpose and Limits of This Report

This is the report of the SALT team that visited Westerly High School from April 11-15, 2005.

The SALT visit report makes every effort to provide your school with a valid, specific picture of how well your students are learning. The report also portrays how the teaching in your school affects learning, and how the school supports learning and teaching. The purpose of developing this information is to help you make changes in teaching and the school that will improve the learning of your students. The report is valid because the team's inquiry is governed by a protocol that is carefully designed to make it possible for visit team members to make careful judgments using accurate evidence. The careful exercise of professional judgment makes the findings useful for school improvement because these judgments identify where the visit team thinks the school is doing well, and where it is doing less well.

The major questions the team addressed were:

- ◆ *How well do students learn at Westerly High School?*
- ◆ *How well does the teaching at Westerly High School affect learning?*
- ◆ *How well does Westerly High School support learning and teaching?*

The following features of this visit are at the heart of the report:

Members of the visit team are primarily teachers and administrators from Rhode Island public schools. The majority of team members are teachers. The names and affiliations of the team members are listed at the end of the report.

The team sought to capture what makes this school work, or not work, as a public institution of learning. Each school is unique and the team has tried to capture what makes Westerly High School distinct.

The team did not compare this school to any other school.

When writing the report, the team deliberately chose words that it thought would best convey its message to the school, based on careful consideration of what it had learned about the school.

The team reached consensus on each conclusion, each recommendation, and each commendation in this report.

The team made its judgment explicit.

This report reflects only the week in the life of the school that was observed and considered by this team. The report is not based on what the school plans to do in the future or on what it has done in the past.

This school visit is supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education as a component of School Accountability for Learning and Teaching (SALT). To gain the full advantages of a peer visiting system, RIDE deliberately did not participate in the active editing of this SALT visit report. That was carried out by the team's Chair with the support of Catalpa. Ltd.

The team closely followed a rigorous protocol of inquiry that is rooted in Practice-based Inquiry™ (Catalpa Ltd). The detailed *Handbook for Chairs of the SALT School Visit, 2nd Edition* describes the theoretical constructs behind the SALT visit and stipulates the many details of the visit procedures. The *Handbook* and other relevant documents are available at www.Catalpa.org. Contact Rick Richards at (401) 222-4600 x 2194 or ride0782@ride.ri.net for further information about the SALT visit protocol.

SALT visits undergo rigorous quality control. Catalpa Ltd. monitors each visit and determines whether the report can be endorsed. Endorsement assures the reader that the team and the school followed the visit protocol. It also assures that the conclusions and the report meet specified standards.

Sources of Evidence

The Sources of Evidence that this team used to support its conclusions are listed in the appendix.

The team spent a total of over 151 hours in direct classroom observation. Most of this time was spent in observing complete lessons or classes. Almost every classroom was visited at least once, and almost every teacher was observed more than once. Team members had conversations with various teachers and staff for a total of 56 hours.

The full visit team built the conclusions, commendations, and recommendations presented here through intense and thorough discussion. The team met for a total of 33 hours in team meetings spanning the five days of the visit. This time does not include the time the team spent in classrooms, with teachers, and in meetings with students, parents, and school and district administrators.

The team did agree by consensus that every conclusion in this report is:

- ◆ *Important enough to include in the report*
- ◆ *Supported by the evidence the team gathered during the visit*
- ◆ *Set in the present, and*
- ◆ *Contains the judgment of the team*

Using the Report

This report is designed to have value to all audiences concerned with how Westerly High School can improve student learning. However, the most important audience is the school itself.

How your school improvement team reads and considers the report is the critical first step. RIDE will provide a SALT Fellow to lead a follow-up session with the school improvement team to help start the process. With support from the Westerly School Department School Improvement Coordinator and from SALT fellows, the school improvement team should carefully decide what changes it wants to make in learning, teaching, and the school, and amend its School Improvement Plan to reflect these decisions.

The Westerly School Department, RIDE and the public should consider what the report says or implies about how they can best support Westerly High School as it works to strengthen its performance.

Any reader of this report should consider the report as a whole. A reader who only looks at recommendations misses important information.

2. PROFILE OF WESTERLY HIGH SCHOOL

Westerly High School, located in Westerly, Rhode Island, is the only high school in the district and serves students in grades nine through twelve. The school, which was built in 1936, has undergone numerous improvements and additions over the past 74 years. In 1967, a wing was added to the southern side of the Ward Avenue building. In 1978, a wing was added to the Park Avenue side. This included a 1,500-seat gymnasium and student locker rooms, a two-story classroom wing, and a heating system update. In 1988, the auditorium and the cafeteria received numerous repairs; the library was enlarged; tiles were replaced in some classrooms; and carpeting was installed in others. A three-story elevator and an elevator in the auditorium were also installed. The incline of the ramp on the first floor was reduced to address the needs of the handicapped and/or disabled students at WHS. A bond approved in 1994 allowed money for a new library media center, a fitness center and additional computer labs.

A principal, two assistant principals, an instructional coordinator/department chair/teacher, 12 other department chairs, a Student Information Management (SIM) Team, 82 full- and part-time regular education teachers, four guidance counselors, 15 special education teachers, two reading specialists, one school-nurse teacher, one social worker shared with another district school, two psychologists (one full-time, one part-time), one behavioral specialist, two librarians, six teachers assigned to off-site programs, one school to work coordinator, one school resource officer, one student activities/athletic director, one student assistance counselor, two staff members assigned to the Westerly Integrated Social Services Program (WISSP), nine study/hall monitors, two cafeteria aides, seven secretaries, nine special education aides, and six custodians serve the students at Westerly High School.

Of the 1157 students in attendance, 91% are white, 1.7% is African American, 4% are Asian, 2.3% are Hispanic, and 1% is Native American. Sixteen-and-seven-tenths percent of the students receive some type of special education service. Eighteen percent are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Westerly High School offers its students a comprehensive curriculum. They can chose from a variety of coursework levels, including career level, college level and AP courses to address their individual strengths and interests. School to work programs and internships at WHS offer students opportunities to acquire hands-on skills experience and to explore different career options. The program includes classroom speakers, tours of industries, mentoring, and service learning. Job-shadowing and apprenticeship programs involve supervised work placement. The school offers employment and training opportunities in the arts and communication, in business and management, in health services, in human resources, in natural resources, and in industrial and engineering careers. Beginning with tenth grade, WHS students can choose to attend the Chariho Vocational School for various programs. Westerly High School has its own cosmetology program, which decreases the number of students traveling to Chariho. The family and consumer science department offers students the chance to experience hands-on child development opportunities, as well as training in the culinary arts. Furthermore, the business department offers the Finance Academy. The technology department offers engineering courses, videography opportunities, the Cisco Academy, and an A+ program. Students at WHS also have the opportunity to enroll in courses at the Community College of Rhode Island (CCRI), Rhode Island College (RIC), and Johnson & Wales University for the purpose of receiving college credit, high school credit, or simultaneous credit from WHS and a second institute.

The block schedule at Westerly has been adjusted to allow most ninth grade students to take English and math year round. The Freshman Academy offers support for those who are identified in grade eight as students who would benefit from a team approach to learning. Reading specialists and special educators currently use the READ 180 program to improve the reading skills of identified students. Through WISSP, the school collaborates with community partners to address the social-emotional needs of those students deemed “at-risk” through prevention, intervention, and treatment efforts. Additional programs to support these students include the Student Team Assistance Room (STAR), EXCEL (an off-site computer based instructional program), LINKS (an off-site program for behaviorally challenged students), Academic Career Education (ACE), the Alcove (a home-base for Asperger Syndrome students), and the HUB (a center for resource students). WHS implements an Advisor-Advisee Program to personalize the learning environment. Two teachers are assigned to 20-25 students with whom they meet daily. Each Wednesday the advisor-advisee period is devoted to silent sustained reading.

Westerly High School is one of the first schools in the state to participate in the RI Scholars Program. Students are invited to become RI Scholars during their 8th grade year. Business representatives and community members meet with these students to challenge them to pursue rigorous academic coursework throughout their high school careers. To achieve recognition as a RI Scholar, a student must reach high standards and exceed the graduation requirements currently set forth by the school.

In addition to a variety of sports activities, students at WHS enjoy a host of extracurricular activities including participation in the Chemistry Team, Academic Decathlon, Martha C. Babcock Essay Contest, Otis P. Chapman Prize Speaking Contest, All-State and national competitions for band and chorus, the newly formed Robotics Team, Battle of the Classes activities, History Day, the International Club, Students against Drunk Driving (SADD), the Outdoors Club, and the Chess Club. Students have the chance to develop their leadership skills by holding class office, participating on the student council, becoming members of the peer help line, as well as through peer tutoring, students as mediators, Big Sisters programs, and Student Character Education Committee. An active Theater Scrapbook Company performs one or two musicals each year. All students perform community service as part of their graduation requirements.

3. PORTRAIT OF WESTERLY HIGH SCHOOL AT THE TIME OF THE VISIT

As one approaches the stone steps of Westerly High School, a large banner stating “RESPONSIBILITY” welcomes visitors. The classic, 1930’s building shows its age in stark contrast to the youthful energy and enthusiasm that pulses through its corridors and classrooms. The sparkle is not from the worn granite stairs and old linoleum tiles, but from the positive interactions among students, faculty, staff, and administrators.

Students come to school eager to learn. They are respectful, polite, caring, and eager to please. They enjoy the active learning in which they participate, but cringe at extended “chalk and talk” lessons. While all students read well, the quality of their writing and problem solving skills varies. Students have a keen interest in connecting what they learn in school to the “real world.”

Sincerity and concern for students are hallmarks of the teachers at Westerly. They are committed to the success of every student, and they work hard to help their students learn. Yet, some teachers struggle to use the 80-minute instructional block effectively.

The culture and climate of this school is reflective of the rich tradition and values of this close-knit community, where pride, respect, and achievement are greatly valued. Various programs help meet the diverse needs of all students as learners and individuals. The principal is unquestionably the instructional leader of the school, and an effective administrative team supports her. The School Improvement Plan serves as a roadmap for improving student learning here.

4. FINDINGS ON STUDENT LEARNING

Conclusions

The quality of student writing ranges from ineffective to excellent. The less effective writing fails to interest the reader, is too brief, or lacks sufficient supporting details. The excellent writing at Westerly exhibits textual support of the argument, clear transitions from one idea to another, varied sentence structure, and depth of thought and analysis. Students understand the importance of identifying a thesis and then developing the argument of their paper. Students shape their writing according to the expectations of their teachers. For example, when students write journal entries that their teachers do not collect or assess, most of them are not concerned about the quality of their writing. They use sentence fragments, poor grammatical structure, and superficial ideas. Conversely, when teachers collect and assess their journal entries, students produce higher quality writing. Students' formal writing such as research papers, essays for tests, and most scientific laboratory reports is quite good. Students are learning to write regularly within disciplines when they write lab reports in science class, research papers in orchestra, and portfolios in child development. Students say they would enjoy writing more if they could choose to write about interesting topics more often. Students in lower level classes write less than their peers in upper level classes. The 2004 New Standards Reference Examination Writing Effectiveness subtest scores support these findings of inconsistency: only 49% of the students achieved the standard or achieved the standard with honors. *(following students, observing classes, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, meeting with students, talking with students, teachers, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

In contrast, most WHS students read often and well. They know how to analyze and interpret what they read. They describe text in their own words and relate their reading to other books they have read, experiences in their own lives, and events in the world. Students infer the motivation of characters in novels, understand how to identify and support theme development in literature, and explain the development of symbolism and character. They use their reading to extrapolate information to use in their lab procedures and visual basic programming, as well as in the research papers they write. Those students who are not able to do these things independently are working hard to learn these skills. Students report that they read self-selected unassigned materials such as books or magazines for entertainment. The librarian reports that students borrow many novels on a regular basis. While 50% of students achieved or achieved the standard with honors on the 2004 New Standards Reference Examination Reading: Analysis and Interpretation subtest, it is important to note that another 40% *nearly* achieved the standard. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, talking with students and teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district strategic plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

Many students problem solve effectively and excitedly. Students report that they solve problems mainly in their math, science and business classes. They do not always recognize when they are solving problems in other areas. The SALT team identifies numerous problem-solving situations across the curriculum. For example, students creatively market play-doh models, repair routers, conduct provoking debates about current events, and construct newsletters and poetry. Nevertheless, they struggle to connect and transfer the strategies they have learned in one situation to other situations, such as those in math class. Consequently, it is not surprising that only 39% of students achieved the standard or achieved the standard with honors on the New Standards Reference Examination problem-solving subtest. (*observing classes, following students, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, meeting with the students and district administrators*)

Westerly students love their high school and feel safe here. These students display remarkable self-control and respect for their peers, the adults in the school, and the school facility. They take pride and show ownership in “their school.” Self-confident, they willingly interact and converse with the SALT visiting team members, participate on the School Improvement Team, and approach administrators about their concerns and their desire to participate on Learning Walks™. Generally, they are self-directed and motivated learners. They respond positively to activities that involve them in the learning process, such as Socratic debates. Students, however, say that they dislike sitting passively and listening to lectures for extended periods, which they regularly do. They express a desire for additional learning opportunities and lessons that are relevant to their lives. (*following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students and teachers, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, 2004 SALT Survey report*)

Important Thematic Findings in Student Learning

Students:

- ◆ *Are conscientious and motivated learners when they actively participate in their own learning*
- ◆ *Read confidently, write, and problem solve across the curriculum*
- ◆ *Struggle to transfer problem solving abilities to mathematical tasks*
- ◆ *Feel safe and supported by their school, both socially and academically*

5. FINDINGS ON TEACHING FOR LEARNING

Conclusions

Teachers successfully teach their students to read well. They use multiple strategies to address the diverse needs of all students. They guide students to connect what they read to themselves, their world, and other books they have read. Teachers facilitate meaningful whole-class discussions about literature, articles, and primary source documents. Across disciplines, they expect students to draw conclusions from their reading, make and support their assertions about text, and evaluate and critique what they read. Teachers support students who fall two to four years below grade level through intensive direct instruction tailored to meet their specific reading needs. They emphasize the importance of reading by providing significant time during the school day for students to read, maintaining a rich library collection, and creating a faculty-student reading group. Most importantly, they require all students, regardless of level, to read complex materials such as Shakespearean plays, classical literature, and technical manuals. Hence, Westerly High School students read often and gain the skills to read well. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team and students, observing the school outside of the classroom, talking with students and teachers, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district strategic plan)*

WHS faculty work hard, with varying degrees of success, to support writing within disciplines. Some teachers are just beginning to learn how to incorporate quality writing in their disciplines. The recent introduction of school-wide writing rubrics demonstrates their commitment to incorporate and improve writing within all subject areas. Teachers require a variety of writing formats for all students, regardless of level—such as the five-paragraph essay, journal entries, research papers, lab reports, and self-assessments. For extended formal pieces, they break the process of formal writing down into small, manageable parts. Although a lot of writing is taking place, teachers have inconsistent understandings of and expectations for quality writing. For example, some allow students to copy their writing directly from text. These teachers accept incomplete sentences and rarely provide students with feedback on the quality of their writing. Some teachers of lower level classes require their students to write less than those in upper levels. As a consequence, the quality of student writing varies within and among both disciplines and class levels. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students and teachers, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing completed and ongoing student work, discussing student work with teachers, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district strategic plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries)*

Teachers across disciplines require their students to problem solve in a variety of creative ways. Many teachers, however, fail to address the need of students to solve real life problems or to develop their understanding of problem solving strategies that they can apply to new situations. District administrators aptly report that many teachers deliver their math classes in a traditional “chalk and talk” manner. The SALT team agrees. Teachers report that they feel pressured, due to the block schedule, to focus on getting through the curriculum; time for exploration is a “luxury.” As a result, too many teachers overly concentrate their efforts on developing the mathematical skills of their students, at the expense of developing their mathematical problem solving abilities. Consequently, students struggle to transfer and apply their problem solving skills to new, complex math problems such as those found on the New Standards Reference Examination. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, and parents, meeting with students and district administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries, reviewing district strategic plan, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

The hardworking teachers at Westerly High School go the extra mile to meet the needs of their students. The caring and dedicated staff put kids first, creating a true student-centered learning environment. They willingly stay after school to help students, respond promptly to concerns of parents, and treat every student as a special individual. Students report that they email questions to teachers after the school day has ended and receive responses in time to finish projects for their classes the following day. Teachers respect their administrators, parents, their peers, and their students. They work diligently to implement numerous new initiatives and embrace the continual challenge of improving their school. Teachers are currently field testing seventy-two school-wide rubrics that they have created together. They actively pursue and attend professional development to improve their teaching, such as Disciplinary Literacy training. Notably, these teachers find time to collaborate on their own time, even before 6:30 a.m. The exceptional pride and spirit of these teachers permeates all aspects of their professional responsibilities. These practices build an environment in which all students can learn. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, reviewing classroom assessments, reviewing records of professional development activities, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing school improvement plan, 2004 SALT Survey report, 2005 Information Works!)*

Many teachers at Westerly make good use of their 80-minute block periods. These teachers use a variety of activities and teaching methods within a period. They switch among activities often, transitioning expertly among direct instruction/lecture, meaningful small group projects, hands-on activities, and individual work. Their pacing of these activities during class time is appropriate. Too many teachers, however, are less adept at using the longer periods. In some classes, teachers drag their activities out to take significantly longer than necessary. Others spend too long lecturing students, requiring them passively to copy notes from the board. Parents and students report that some teachers simply “pile on the work,” give too much busywork, or allow too much time for students to do their homework during class. Thus, students in these classes learn less. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with students, district administrators, and parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators)*

Commendations for Westerly High School

Dedicated, hardworking staff that put students' needs first

Emphasis on reading, writing, and problem solving within all disciplines

High expectations of all students' reading

Recommendations for Westerly High School

Maintain high expectations of all students' reading.

Require additional, meaningful writing of all students, regardless of their placement. Continue to require writing within all disciplines.

Pursue additional, quality, school-wide professional development in the areas of writing within disciplines, effective problem solving instruction, and the effective use of the block schedule.

Explicitly instruct problem solving processes and strategies to students, particularly in mathematics.

Provide time and opportunities for students to explore real-world problem solving situations.

Continue to maintain the level of enthusiastic support for students and their needs.

Consider the instructional practices used during your class periods. Make necessary amendments to use the available time more effectively.

Recommendations for Westerly School Department

Provide additional, quality, school-wide professional development in the areas of writing within disciplines, effective problem solving instruction, and the effective use of the block schedule.

Be creative in finding time for teachers to collaborate during the school day.

6. FINDINGS ON SCHOOL SUPPORT FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING

Conclusions

The School Improvement Plan, as written, effectively targets needed areas of improvement at Westerly, particularly the recent High School Regulations. The action steps outlined in both “Changing Student Learning Behaviors” and “Changing Instruction” are alive and well within the classrooms. Yet, some of these steps need additional development and specificity. Team membership, open and welcoming to everyone, represents the different constituencies of the school community. Administrators, teachers, parents, and students actively participate on the team and understand the plan. Consequently, Westerly High School is assessing its progress and taking steps to improve the learning of its students. *(following students, observing classes, talking with students, teachers, parents, school and district administrators, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, and parents, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

The enthusiastic and passionate principal effectively leads this school toward a clear, shared vision. She has an open door policy; students say they can go to her with any questions or concerns they might have. Parents and faculty do the same. Her amazing energy motivates the staff to go the extra mile. The principal “leads the charge” to improve student learning. District administrators describe her as an effective communicator “who could lead this school anywhere.” The principal empowers the other school administrators and teachers to make school-based decisions. Department heads and the Faculty Collaborative give teachers a clear role in leading the school. Consequently, everyone feels a shared ownership and responsibility for the education of all students. The assistant principals share this passion and school pride. They use their strengths to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment. They also take an active role in improving learning by working on the School Improvement Team, leading school reform initiatives, and supporting the staff. Hence, Westerly High School provides an optimal environment for student learning. *(following students, observing classes, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report, 2005 Information Works!, reviewing district and school policies and practices, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district strategic plan)*

Westerly High School does an exceptional job of personalizing the learning environment to meet the needs of each and every student. It provides a wide array of support services and programs to accomplish this end. The newly implemented advisor/advisee program strives to provide each student with a daily connection to one adult in the school. Some advisors do an exceptional job, while others are still learning how to use the time well. English as a Second Language (ESL) students receive individualized support to transition into English speaking classrooms. EXCEL and the Academic Career Education Program (ACE) support academically at-risk students both on and off campus. The Westerly Integrated Social Services Program (WISSP), the Student Team Assistance Room (STAR), and LINKS provide needed supports for students who have social, behavioral, or emotional issues. Special education students receive in-class assistance, as well as academic support in The Resource Hub. Additionally, all students can access “the Hub” for academic help. The Alcove provides an environment in which students with Asperger’s Syndrome discover how they best learn. The Step-Up program appropriately meets the needs of developmentally disabled students. Cosmetology, construction, and other career programs provide opportunities for all students to explore and/or earn certification in future career paths. This myriad of programs ensures that every student has multiple opportunities to be successful in school and beyond. *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with the school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, and school administrators, reviewing school improvement plan, reviewing district and school policies and practices)*

If you were to look up “community” in the dictionary, you might well find a picture of Westerly High School. In spite of the age and sporadic disrepair of the facility, WHS is a welcoming and caring family of learners. Students, parents, faculty, and staff exhibit respect for one another, the work they do here, and the clean school facility. Students say they love coming to school, and the attendance rate shows they do! Parents say their students are “physically and emotionally safe to be who they are.” Such a community encourages all students to do their best. Go Bulldogs! *(following students, observing classes, observing the school outside of the classroom, meeting with school improvement team, students, school and district administrators, parents, talking with students, teachers, parents, and school administrators, 2004 SALT Survey report, 2005 Information Works!)*

Commendations for Westerly High School

- Safe, supportive, and respectful learning community
- Shared vision and ownership of responsibility for the success of all students
- Strong and effective school leadership focused on student learning
- Effective school improvement plan and team
- Extensive array of support services and programs to meet the needs of every student

Recommendations for Westerly High School

- Add more specificity to the action steps of the School Improvement Plan.
- Provide support to increase teacher comfort levels with and consistent delivery of the advisory program.
- Continue to focus school leadership on helping students learn better.
- Continue providing the necessary support services so all students can succeed.
- Maintain the strong sense of community and school spirit.

Recommendations for Westerly School Department

- Continue to support and fund student centered programs.
- Make necessary repairs to the school facility.

7. FINAL ADVICE TO WESTERLY HIGH SCHOOL

It is clear that WHS is a place where the entire school community values learning. The energy and passion of the school principal is infectious among faculty, staff, and students. WHS is committed to personalizing the learning experience, which is evident in the many support services available to students. You provide a safe and supportive environment to meet the diverse educational needs of all. Treasure and protect the community you have created. The strong and safe learning environment you all own is a perfect vehicle to take you to higher levels of excellence.

Many teachers exhibit creative thinking in structuring their classes. Share your wealth with your colleagues! Continue your work to improve students' writing and problem solving within all disciplines.

Congratulate one another on your hard work, and persist in keeping students in the forefront of everything you do. The SALT team hopes this report serves to recognize and support your genuine efforts to challenge and support all students.

ENDORSEMENT OF SALT VISIT TEAM REPORT

Westerly High School

April 15, 2005

Catalpa Ltd. monitors all SALT visits and examines each SALT visit team report to determine whether it should be endorsed as a legitimate SALT report. The endorsement decision is based on procedures and criteria specified in *Endorsing SALT Visit Team Reports*. (available on Catalpa website). Catalpa Ltd. bases its judgment about the legitimacy of a report on these three questions:

Did the SALT visit team and the host school conduct the visit in a manner that is reasonably consistent with the protocol for the visit?

Do the conclusions of the report meet the tests for conclusions specified in the visit protocol (important, accurate, set in present, shows the team's judgment)?

Does the report meet the tests for a report as specified in the visit protocol (fair, useful, and persuasive of productive action)?

Using the answers to these questions, the final decision to endorse the report answers the overall endorsement question: Is this a legitimate SALT team visit report? In order to make this determination, Catalpa weighs all the questions and issues that have been raised to decide whether a report is legitimate or not. While it is possible that a challenge related to one of the three questions listed above would be serious enough to withhold or condition the endorsement, it is more likely that issues serious enough to challenge a report's legitimacy will cut across the three questions.

While the SALT visit protocol requires that all SALT visits are conducted to an exceptionally high standard of rigor, visits are "real-life" events; it is impossible to control for all unexpected circumstances that might arise. The protocol for the conduct of the visit is spelled out in the *Handbook for SALT Visit Chairs, 1st edition*.

Since unexpected circumstances might result in either the team or the school straying too far from the protocol for a visit, Catalpa monitors both the school and the team during a visit regarding the conduct of the visit.

Most often actual visit events or issues do not challenge a report's legitimacy and Catalpa's monitoring and endorsement is routine. A district administrator, principal, faculty member or parent may not like a report, or think it is too negative, or think the visit should have been conducted in a manner that is not consistent with the protocol. None of these represent a challenge to a report's legitimacy; concerns that might challenge an endorsement are based on events that stray too far from the protocol.

The Catalpa review of this visit and this report was routine.

The steps Catalpa completed for this review were:

- discussion with the chair about any issues related to the visit before it began
- daily discussion of any issues with the visit chair during the visit
- observation of a portion of the visit
- discussion with the principal regarding any concerns about the visit at the time of the visit
- thorough review of the report in both its pre-release and final version form

The findings from the review are:

1. This team was certified to meet team membership requirements by RIDE staff.
2. This report was produced by a legitimate SALT Visit that was led by a trained SALT Visit Chair and conducted in a manner that is consistent with SALT Visit procedures.
3. The conclusions are legitimate SALT visit conclusions.
4. The report is a legitimate SALT visit report.

Accordingly, Catalpa Ltd. endorses this report.



Thomas A. Wilson, EdD
Catalpa Ltd.
May 31, 2005

REPORT APPENDIX

Sources of Evidence for This Report

In order to write this report the team examined test scores, student work, and other documents related to this school. The school improvement plan for Westerly High School was the touchstone document for the team. No matter how informative documents may be, however, there is no substitute for being at the school while it is in session—in the classrooms, in the lunchroom, and in the hallways. The team built its conclusions primarily from information about what the students, staff, and administrators think and do during their day. Thus, this visit allowed the team to build informed judgments about the teaching, learning, and support that actually takes place at Westerly High School.

The visit team collected its evidence from the following sources of evidence:

- ◆ *direct classroom observation*
- ◆ *observing the school outside of the classroom*
- ◆ *following 13 students for a full day*
- ◆ *observing the work of teachers and staff for a full day*
- ◆ *meeting at scheduled times with the following groups:*
 - teachers*
 - school improvement team*
 - school and district administrators*
 - students*
 - parents*
- ◆ *talking with students, teachers, staff, and school administrators*
- ◆ *reviewing completed and ongoing student work*
- ◆ *interviewing teachers about the work of their students*
- ◆ *analyzing state assessment results as reported in Information Works!*
- ◆ *reviewing the following documents:*
 - district and school policies and practices*
 - records of professional development activities*
 - classroom assessments*
 - school improvement plan for Westerly High School*
 - district strategic plan*
 - 2004 SALT Survey report*
 - classroom textbooks*
 - 2003 Information Works!*
 - 2004 New Standards Reference Examination School Summaries*
 - School and District Report Cards*
 - The New Diploma System brochure*

Yearbooks: 2002, 2003, 2004

Curriculum Binders:

- *Westerly High School Social Studies Curriculum Grades 9-12*
- *Westerly High School English Language Arts Curriculum*
- *Mathematics Curriculum Westerly High School Grades 9-12*
- *Technology Department Curriculum Outlines Westerly High School*
- *Visual Arts Curriculum Westerly School Department*
- *Guidance*
- *World Language Department Curriculum Guide*
- *Business Education at Westerly High School Curriculum Outline*
- *Physical Education Contract and Philosophy*
- *Science Curriculum K-12 Westerly School Department: A Work in Progress*

Other Binders:

- *Westerly High School Senior Project*
- *Westerly High School School Safety SALT Action Team Report*
- *Literacy Initiatives at Westerly High School*
- *Disciplinary Literacy*
- *Westerly High School Self Study SALT Data April 2005*
- *Shadowing a Student: A Compilation of Observations and Reflections WHS 2004-2005*
- *Teaching in the Black Best Practice: Lesson Plans, Common Tasks, Applied Learning Activities, Authentic Assessments*
- *Westerly High School's Proficiency Based Graduation Requirements and Rubrics*
- *Westerly High School Advisor/Advisee Program Information Manual*
- *Advisor/Advisee Program 1 and 2 of 2*
- *Westerly high School SALT Study Activity One: Examining New Standards Reference Examination Results*
- *Westerly Public Schools FY 2005-2006 Budget Request As presented to the Westerly School Committee November 3, 2004*
- *Westerly High School SALT Visit April 2005*
- *Westerly Staff Development Credit Hour Program*
- *Westerly High School NEASC Visiting Team Report, October 1999*
- *Senior Project Examples*
- *Career Planning Research Builds Pathways to the Future*

State Assessment Results for Westerly High School

Assessment results create pieces of evidence that the visit team uses as it conducts its inquiry. The team uses this evidence to shape its efforts to locate critical issues for the school. It also uses this evidence, along with other evidence, to draw conclusions about those issues.

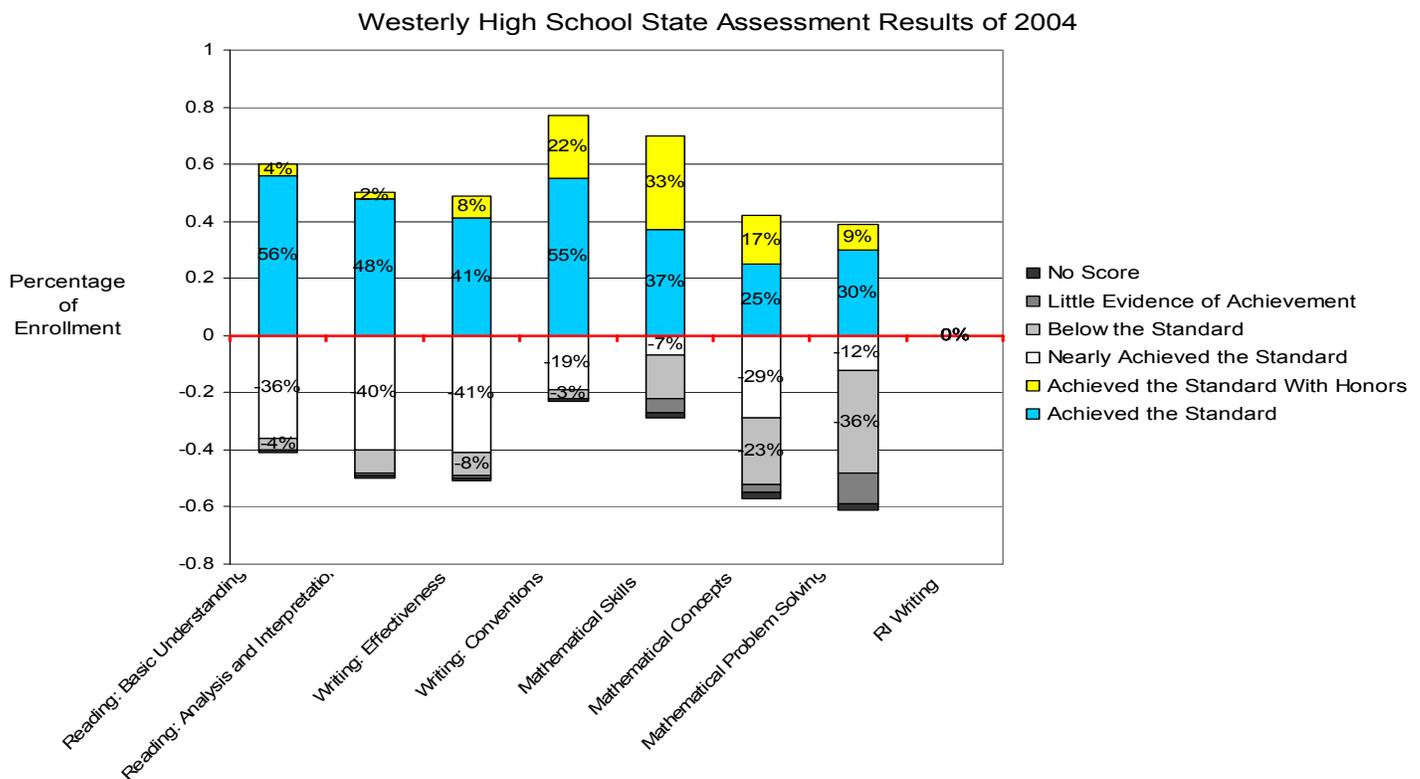
This school's results are from the latest available state assessment information. It is presented here in four different ways:

- ◆ against performance standards;
- ◆ across student groups within the school;
- ◆ and over time.

RESULTS IN RELATION TO PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

The first display shows how well the students do in relation to standards in English/Language Arts and mathematics. Student results are shown as the percentage of students taking the test whose score places them in the various categories at, above, or below the performance standard. Endorsed by the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education in 1998, the tested standards can be found in the publication *New Standards Performance Standards*.

Table1. 2002-03 Student Results on Rhode Island State Assessments

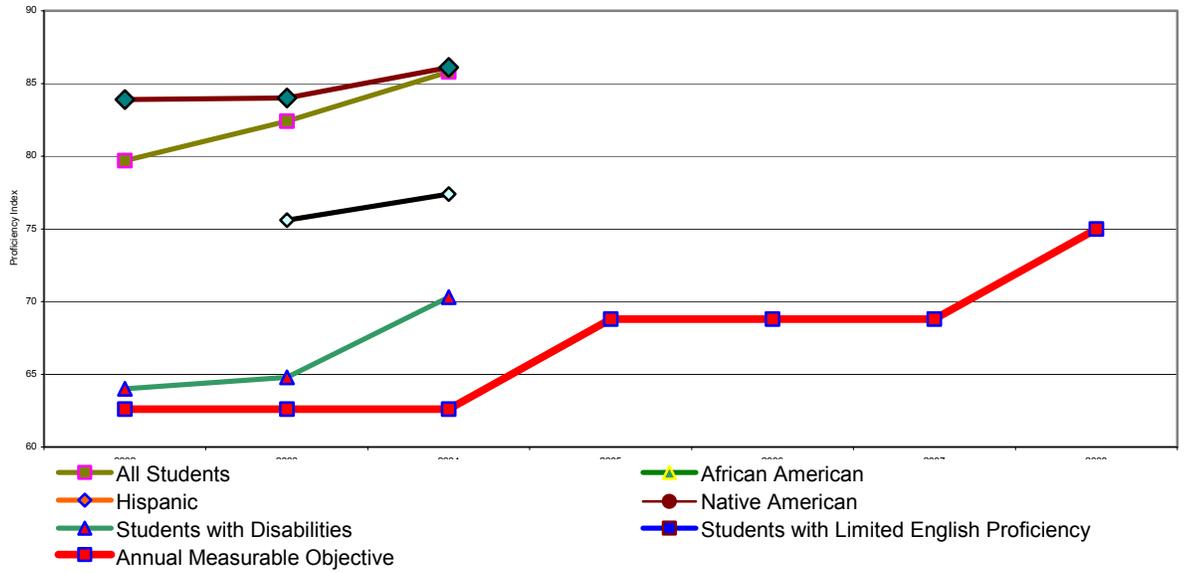


RESULTS ACROSS STUDENT GROUPS WITHIN THE SCHOOL

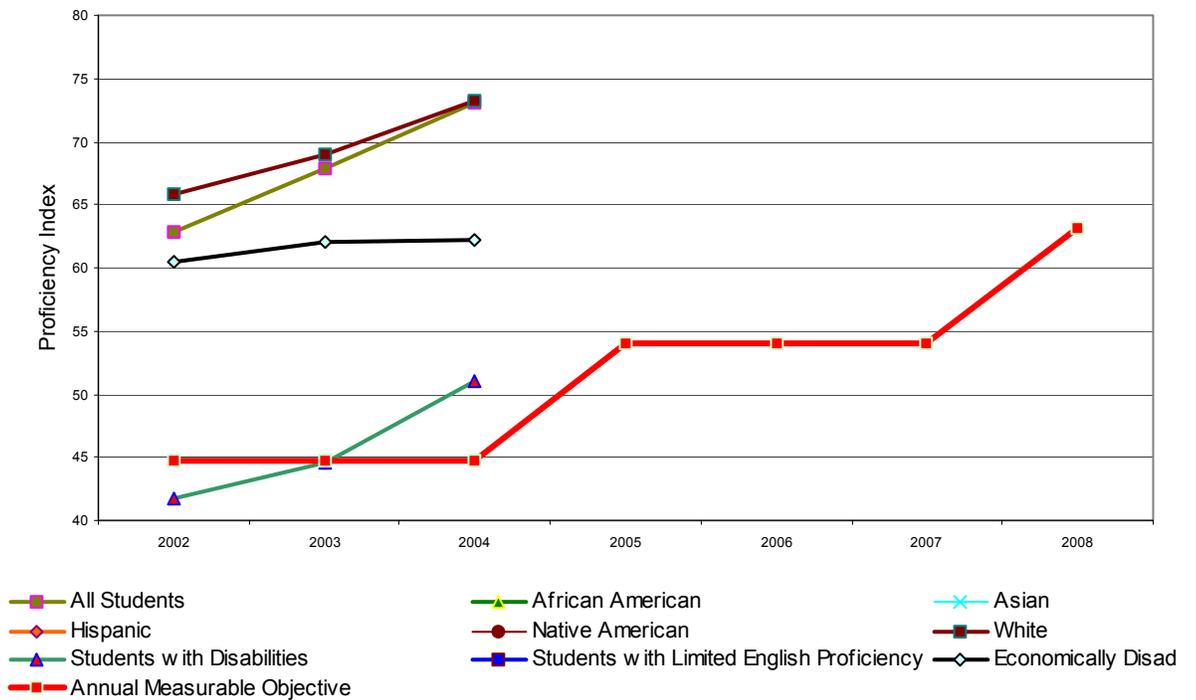
An important way to display student results is across different groups of students with different characteristics who are in the school. This display showing targets and index scores, in accordance with the No Child Left Behind federal legislation creates information about how well the school meets the learning needs of its various students. Since breaking students into these smaller groups can result in groups becoming too small to show accurate results, this display shows the results based on three years of testing. Any student group whose index scores do not meet the targets set by RIDE require additional attention to close its performance gap.

Table 3. 2002-2003 Student Results across Subgroups

Annual Proficiency, Westerly High School, ELA, Gr. 10



Annual Proficiency, Westerly High School, Gr. 10 Math



REPORT CARD FOR WESTERLY HIGH SCHOOL

This Report Card show the performance of Westerly High School compared to the school's annual measurable objectives (AMO).

These report card scores describe Westerly High School as a school in need of improvement, making insufficient progress.

Table 4. Report Card for Westerly High School

2004 Rhode Island School Report Card

RI SCHOOL: **WESTERLY HIGH SCHOOL**

RI DISTRICT: **WESTERLY**

GRADE: **11**

INDEX PROFICIENCY SCORE, 2002-04	ENGLISH LANG. ARTS TARGET SCORE:				MATHEMATICS TARGET SCORE: 44.8			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
			62.6					
All Students	85.8	YES	85.7	79.2	73	YES	72.9	66
African Americans	*	YES	*	70.1	*	YES	*	48.1
Asian	*	YES	*	78.9	*	YES	*	64.3
Hispanic	*	YES	*	66.9	*	YES	*	48.3
Native Americans	*	YES	*	73.6	*	YES	*	56
White	86.1	YES	86	83.8	73.2	YES	73	72.4
Students with Disabilities	70.3	YES	69.7	61.5	51	YES	50.6	43.9
Students with Limited English Proficiency	*	YES	*	53.4	*	YES	*	41.7
Students who are Economically Disadvantaged	77.4	YES	76.6	68.5	62.2	YES	61.9	50.1

PERCENT OF STUDENTS TESTED, 2002-04	Target: 95%			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE
English Language Arts	99.3	YES	99.2	96.6
Mathematics	99.2	YES	99.2	96.6

GRADUATION RATE	Target: 71.4%			
	THIS SCHOOL	TARGET MET?	THIS DISTRICT	THE STATE

	SCHOOL	MET?	DISTRICT	
	88.7	YES	88.7	82.8

TARGETS MET/MISSED, THIS SCHOOL		
	TARGETS MET	TARGETS MISSED
English Language Arts Index Score	9	0
Mathematics Index Score	9	0
Percent Tested	2	0
Graduation Rate	1	0

THIS SCHOOL IS CLASSIFIED AS:

High Performing and Improving

Information Works! data for Westerly High School is available at <http://www.ridoe.net>.

THE WESTERLY HIGH SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT TEAM

Cindy Arsenault, Parent

Robert Arsenault, Parent

Geoffrey Bowen, Student

Sarah Cary, Teacher

Bonnie Conroy, Parent

Paula Dinoto, Principal

Jill Federico, Student

Rosemary Federico, Parent

Anne Greene, Assistant Principal

Dan King, Parent

Cathy Lathrop, Parent

Tony Lementowicz, Teacher

Lori Liguori, Parent

Michael Lynch, Parent

Joseph Masucci, Student

Hap Rocketto, Parent

Denise Sevigny, Teacher

Jim Spellman, Assistant Principal

Gail Thompson, Teacher

Mary Nancy Toscano, Teacher

Lynn Traver, Parent

Marian Turco, Parent

Jessica Turco, Student

MEMBERS OF THE SALT VISIT TEAM

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Office of School Improvement and Support Services
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